



## Inclusive Curriculum Across Grades

TO: Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Robin Desmond, Chief Academic Officer *Robin Desmond*

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The following report is in response to the motion by Jacqueline Doherty:

*Request a report updating the committee on efforts to provide a more inclusive curriculum across the grades.*

The Office of Teaching & Learning is committed to providing a high-quality and inclusive curriculum for all students. The focus is to expand student access to high-quality, standards-aligned curricular materials that improve student outcomes. Through an inclusive, culturally responsive approach, students' culture and identity (including race, ethnicity, multilingualism, and other characteristics) are viewed as assets that help to create learning experiences and environments that value and empower all students. Through the curriculum materials selection process, teams focus on selecting materials that 1) hold high expectations for all students, and support the development of students' academic skills and identities as learners, and 2) understand culture's role in education, students' cultures, and affirm students' backgrounds and identities. Materials are reviewed and adjusted annually. Below, Curriculum Coordinators have provided an overview of the efforts to provide a more inclusive curriculum across the grades within the content areas.

### ELA

Over the past 4 years, the ELA & Literacy department has been working to bring more inclusive texts and revise curriculum to match the students that we serve. Using the concept of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors from Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop and Emily Style, we have worked to replace outdated, inaccurate, and non-inclusive titles in our read alouds and in the text we study as whole class novels or include in book-clubs.

Literacy and Instructional Specialists participated in 3 intensive days of "Deep Equity" professional development in June 2019. This work, coupled with studying and trying Sarah K. Ahmed's *Being the Change* and Cornelius Minor's *We Got This*, have continued a focus on

inclusive practices, addressing identity work with students, and studying differences to acknowledge and counteract potential biases and/or microaggressions.

Using a workshop model, students are encouraged to activate their voice and choice in books they read and topics they write about. Our core reading units of study and writing units of study curriculum also began doing this work in 2019. “In 2019, TCRWP began a reexamination of our curriculum and pedagogy to emphasize the importance of teachers recognizing the funds of knowledge students and their families bring to schools and communities, and to help educators engage students’ strengths and voices. Our work to achieve this continues, as we keep equity and inclusion at the forefront of all that we do at TCRWP.” One example is that the curriculum department, based on a TCRWP suggestion, replaced titles like *Stone Fox* (See Dr. Debbie Reese’s work around indigenous writing) with the more inclusive, less stereotypical, *Indian Shoes* for a grade 3 unit.

Titles of books ordered within the last 4 years have included titles by BIPOC authors about BIPOC characters or people and published recently to maintain relevance. Schools received grant funding to purchase these titles to add to classroom libraries and leveled libraries for all students to access.

During the fall of 2019, all school leaders participated in an ELA & Literacy session to learn about replacing “diversity” with “inclusivity”, and “struggling readers” (deficit model) with “striving readers” (asset-based model), as well as how to share culturally responsive read alouds (A. Ward). Titles address students of varying backgrounds including those with different abilities, the LGBTQA+ community, and focused on various cultures. Each month a new title is shared with Literacy and Instructional Specialists via a read aloud and that title is then shared with teachers to use with students. Many of these books have been available throughout the pandemic via an internal LPS online Virtual Library repository.

For the 2020-2021 school year, additional new titles were ordered for classrooms based on teacher recommendations and culturally responsive characters. These titles will be incorporated into the read alouds teachers use in the 2021-2022 school year.

### **Mathematics**

Eureka Math units were based on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The curriculum seamlessly embeds scaffolding through the simple-to-complex sequencing of exercises and Problem Set items. This logical sequence gradually reduces support and builds in complexity, allowing teachers to identify students’ last point of understanding and to differentiate assignments for either individual or small group work. For all students, the gradual reduction of support builds independent thinking and encourages productive struggle. The lesson plans provide strategically placed margin notes, often categorized by UDL principles, that elaborate on the use of specific scaffolds at applicable times. The notes suggest supports and extensions for English learners, students with disabilities, students performing above grade level, and students performing below grade level. Teacher-writers from across the country wrote Eureka Math to reflect the diverse experiences and backgrounds of students in today’s classrooms. The curriculum offers opportunities for students to explore themselves and their families and see positive representations of themselves through the materials. Names and pictures of people

represent diversity, and problems and exercises relate to real-life experiences, perspectives, and contributions of people from various cultures, ethnicities, and gender identities.

### **Science**

One of the tenets of culturally responsive teaching is empowering students to take ownership of their learning, including topics related to the students' background and culture. We are including student voices in our science lessons by integrating a program called Mystery Science into our K-5 science curriculum. This integration is necessary to align the science curriculum to the updated state science standards. Mystery Science is inquiry based, starting with students' direct experiences and teaching them the science practices to investigate the world around them. Science units are being developed at the middle school level that use "citizen science", where students analyze data that they collect from their own neighborhoods and then evaluate the dataset from across the city to look for trends. We will continue to search for role models from diverse backgrounds to show students that anyone can become a scientist.

### **Social Studies**

LPS will be implementing a new social studies program this fall for K-5 students called Inquiry Journeys. As part of this program, students will investigate inquiry questions by considering multiple perspectives of the same moment in history. Questioning routines in inquiry allow culturally and linguistically diverse students to take ownership of information processing. Students will use primary and secondary sources with diverse representation. Evaluating sources and evidence challenges single stories and dominant narratives and helps to develop a critical lens for analyzing systems. Each unit ends with a call to action which will connect students to their own home, neighborhood, community and culture. Eighth graders and 11th graders will continue to implement action civics with support from Generation Citizen. The topics students choose to investigate and act upon are designed to improve conditions in their community.